

Spurge Hawk-moth *Hyles euphorbiae* (L.)(Lep.: Sphingidae) breeding in northern France

I have already reported this species breeding in 2000 near Tardinghen, Pas-de-Calais, northern France, (*Atropos* number 13: 66) some 100 kilometres north of the normal range of this species as depicted in the map in Pittaway (1993, *The Hawkmoths of the Western Palaearctic*). In September 2002, in the same area, I again saw a well-developed larva of this species. It was travelling rapidly over the dunes, perhaps searching for a new food supply or for a suitable place in which to pupate. I have also discovered a reference to this species (under the name *Celerio euphorbiae*), occurring near Cap Gris Nez as long ago as 1961 in *Report of the University of London Natural History Society Expedition 1961, Cap Gris Nez, North France, 1961*. It is clear from the context of the report that it was likely to have been found in the dunes near Le Chatelet, very close to where my observations were made, in the period 16 August to 13 September of that year. However, the species is simply listed without comment and without any indication of whether referring to imago or larva. My recent records suggest that this species may now be breeding regularly well north of its reported normal range and the 1961 record suggests at least the possibility that it may have done so for several decades.— P. J. OLIVER, The Briar Patch, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0TL.

Rannoch Sprawler *Brachionycha nubeculosa* (Esper) (Lep.: Noctuidae) new to north-east Scotland

There is a select group of enigmatic moths that, within Britain, are Scottish Highland specialists. Lepidopterists have long visited Rannoch and Speyside in search of such species as Cousin German *Protolampra sobrina* (Duponchel) and Rannoch Brindled Beauty *Lycia lapponaria scotica* (Harrison). Deeside also has a long history of entomological activity though for some of these species, their discoveries in Aberdeenshire have come comparatively recently; e.g. Rannoch Brindled Beauty in 1984 (Palmer, R. M. & Young, M. R. 1987. *Lepidoptera of Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire – 5th Appendix. Ent. Rec.* **99**: 111-114) and Slender-striped Rufous *Coenocalpe lapidata* (Hb.) in 2001 (Palmer, R. M., Young, M. R. & Leverton, R. 2002. *Lepidoptera of Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire and Banffshire – 9th Appendix. Ent. Rec.* **114**: 145-148). The most recent such addition to the north-east Scotland list is that of Rannoch Sprawler.

Fired with enthusiasm, having just bought a new generator, I found myself on the evening of 5 April 2002 in upper Deeside (VC 92) after spending the day looking at moorland vegetation nearby. The evening's trapping was purely of an opportunistic nature with no special targets. In the event, though, the haul of around thirty moths of six species recorded by 11pm included two Rannoch Sprawlers. These were attracted to an MV light above a white sheet between 22.00 hours and 22.30 hours. A subsequent visit in colder conditions on 11 April produced very few moths and no further Rannoch Sprawlers.

The location was a birch *Betula pubescens* woodland between Braemar and the Linn of Dee with a heavily grazed under-storey of ericaceous shrubs. In Speyside and Rannoch, the species is said to inhabit old growth birch woodland. The birch at this Deeside locality could not be described as old growth though possibly such trees exist nearby. The moth has not yet been recorded from mature birchwoods further east, between Braemar and Ballater.

The Rannoch Sprawler has been added to the list of moths that have occurred in north-east Scotland (Palmer, Young and Leverton, *op. cit.*). Further trapping and daytime searching is planned for early 2003 with the aim of extending knowledge of the distribution of the moth in this area. It is also hoped that moths from Deeside can be compared with specimens from Rannoch and Speyside; these are said to differ slightly from each other and it will be interesting if it can be determined with which population the Deeside moths have the closest affinity.

Thanks to Bob Palmer for commenting on a draft of this note.— NICK A. LITTLEWOOD, University of Aberdeen, Dept. Plant and Soil Sciences, Cruickshank Building, St. Machar Drive, Aberdeen AB24 3UU (E-mail: n.littlewood@abdn.ac.uk).

Scarce Merveille du Jour *Moma alpium* (Osbeck) (Lep.: Noctuidae): an association with Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*?

On 24 June 2002, David Green and myself recorded a single Scarce Merveille du Jour at a 125watt MV light trap run overnight under the canopy of a stand of Sweet Chestnut in Rewell Wood, West Sussex. This Sweet Chestnut block was last coppiced in 1984.

On the 19 August, I re-visited the site with the aim of trying to locate larvae of the Waved Carpet *Hydrelia sylvata* – another UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species. Although I failed to find any Waved Carpet larvae, I was surprised to find a single nearly full-grown larva of the Scarce Merveille du Jour on a scrubby, two metres tall Sweet Chestnut. This young tree was along a ride on the eastern edge of a block of chestnuts averaging about 10 metres in height, and which was last coppiced in 1990. The nearest Oak, the usual foodplant, was about 40-50metres distant. The larva continued to feed on Sweet Chestnut for a few days before pupating.

This would appear to be a new foodplant for the species in this country and quite possibly in Europe. Porter (1997. *The Colour Identification Guide to Caterpillars of the British Isles*. Viking) gives oak, and Nowacki (1998. *The Noctuids (Lepidoptera, Noctuidae) of Central Europe*. Slamka), covering central Europe, lists *Quercus* spp., *Betula* spp., *Fagus* spp. and *Sorbus* spp. as foodplants.

This larva was found during a study on the Waved Carpet at Rewell Wood, funded by Forest Research (an Agency of the Forestry Commission) and Forest Enterprise. This study is part of Butterfly Conservation's *Action for Threatened Moths Project*. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Robert Thurlow and Stan Abbott for providing access permission to Rewell Wood and the former for also providing details about the ages of the various coppice blocks at the site.— MARK PARSONS, Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.